



The Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness

Chairman Dan Burton (R ~ IN)

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THE AUTISM CRISIS: ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS?

Washington, D.C. – Nationwide, as many as 1.5 million Americans are believed to have some form of autism spectrum disorder, and Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN), Chairman of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, wants to know what the Federal government is doing about it.

As part of a continuing investigation into the growing autism epidemic, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness will hold a hearing entitled, **“The Future Challenges of Autism: A Survey of the Ongoing Initiatives in the Federal Government to Address the Epidemic.” The oversight hearing will be held on Thursday, November 20, 2003, in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building at 2:00 p.m.**

“In the past, autism was considered a rare disease, affecting roughly 1 in 10,000 children,” stated Chairman Burton. “Today, even conservative estimates of autism rates in the United States indicate that 1 in every 500 children is afflicted with the neurodevelopmental disorder, while other scientific studies reported in the *Journal of American Medical Association* have observed rates as high as 1 in every 150 children are affected, and the problem only continues to escalate.”

Continued Chairman Burton, “It is absolutely imperative for our Federal government together with our various health agencies to finally address this epidemic head on so that once and for all we can determine what is causing this surge in autism rates and how to stop it. To that end, I believe the autism conference being sponsored this week by Health and Human Services Secretary Thompson, and Education Secretary Paige is an extremely positive first step.”

The United States government has rightfully begun to acknowledge the present and future public health implications of the autism epidemic, and are currently conducting and funding research into the causation and frequency of the disorder. In addition to funding research into autism spectrum disorders, the Federal government has also provided programs to assist families of autistic individuals with some of the financial costs associated with the care-taking of persons with autism. Dr. Peter Van Dyke from the Health Resources and Services Administration with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has been invited to testify to these initiatives, as well as to provide information on how U.S. citizens may apply to receive these benefits.

Medical professionals have made great progress in recent years developing treatments and therapies that have been shown to benefit autistic individuals. Mr. Rick Rollens, Co-Founder of the M.I.N.D. Institute at the University of California – Davis, has been invited to speak on the current

research that the institute is conducting in regard to autism, as well as to discuss therapies that the institute has found useful in the treatment of autistic patients. In addition, Dr. Stephen Edelson, M.D., F.A.A.E.M. and Director of the Edelson Center for Environmental and Preventative Medicine, has been invited to testify on the treatments that his center has provided to persons with developmental disabilities, and how these therapies have provided a better quality of life for patients.

PANEL ONE WITNESSES:

Dr. Peter Van Dyke

Associate Administrator
Office of Maternal and Child Health Bureau
Health Resources and Services Administration
United States Department of Health & Human Services

PANEL TWO WITNESSES:

Ms. Ilene Schwartz

Director
Center for Training Personnel to Provide Evidence-Based Educational Services to Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Representing United States Department of Education Initiatives

Mr. Rick Rollens

Co-Founder
M.I.N.D. Institute
University of California Davis

Dr. Stephen Edelson

Director
Edelson Center for Environmental and Preventative Medicine

Ms. Colleen Pettinati

Mother of Two Autistic Children

For more information regarding Chairman Burton's ongoing autism investigation, or to see hearing resource materials, please visit the Subcommittee's website at www.reform.house.gov/WHR.